

(Washington, D.C.) – This morning, U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) spoke on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives about the refusal of Republican leaders to allow a vote on legislation that would provide disaster relief to victims of Hurricane Sandy. The text of his remarks follows below.

“Well, you’ve heard it. Our constituents’ lives were devastated by the Sandy disaster. It has now been about nine weeks since Hurricane Sandy brought the winds and the tidal surges. In Central New Jersey, in Connecticut, in New York, people are hurting. Towns have exhausted their emergency funds and exhausted their borrowing capacity.

“In other disasters, such as the disaster associated with Katrina or with wildfires or with any number of other natural disasters, this body has acted, and aid has been provided quickly. And yet today, the Speaker is going to allow the 112th Congress to adjourn before passing the much-needed disaster relief package.

“The Senate acted on this bill. The aid package here was well-constructed; it was ready; all we needed was a vote. And the delay is significant. It adds significantly to the hurt. It is not an exaggeration to say that lives are on the line. People are living wherever they can. They don’t have the shelter. They don’t have the businesses. They don’t have their lives. And the Speaker just walks away. That compounds the disaster. The delay compounds the disaster.

“It has been said, ‘Well, FEMA has some money already in their account that will last for many weeks.’ But we’re not just talking about FEMA. We’re talking about HUD – more than a billion dollars, actually billions, of housing aid. The Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior, the Agriculture Department for food and emergency watershed protection, the EPA for safe drinking water – all of this was in this well-constructed package.

“Now, it’s often been said that the governing principle of the Republican leadership is, ‘You’re on your own.’ And that might actually be a conscientious principle if they really believe in their hearts that your Social Security should be privately invested or you should pay for a college without government help. But this – to say ‘you’re on your own’ after a disaster is inconsiderate, it breaks our trust, it violates an understanding, and it hurts people.”